

PRESS RELEASE



The Cleveland Museum of Art

Public Relations / 11150 East Blvd. / Cleveland, Ohio 44106 / 216 421-7340

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CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART EXHIBITS 1981 ACQUISITIONS
February 17 - March 21, 1982

Approximately 140 works acquired by The Cleveland Museum of Art in 1981 will be gathered together in one gallery for the Museum's annual Year in Review exhibition. The rich variety of the 1981 acquisitions reflects the Museum's commitment to strengthening and broadening the scope of its holdings with works of the highest quality. Some of the new acquisitions have already been publicized and displayed in Museum galleries; others, particularly accessions in the prints and drawings and Oriental collections, are being exhibited for the first time in this Year in Review.

The year's most important acquisition was The Holy Family on the Steps (ca. 1648) by the greatest of 17th-century French painters, Nicolas Poussin. The painting, described by Museum director Sherman Lee as "one of Poussin's greatest religious compositions," is a superb example of the artist's classically-inspired style, demonstrating his mastery of form, color, composition, and expression.

Another significant and much heralded addition to the collection was Fernand Léger's Cubist painting of 1920, The Aviator. The acquisition of this painting ended a long search for a major work by the French master, one which would complement the Museum's collection of works by the three other Cubist masters--Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, and Juan Gris. Also widely publicized last spring was the installation, at the Museum's North Entrance, of Isamu Noguchi's monumental outdoor sculpture, Rock Carvings: Passage of the Seasons, a gift of the Mildred Andrews Fund. In the fall of 1981, contemporary American sculptor Clement Meadmore's bronze sculpture, Branching Out, a gift of The Cleveland Society for Contemporary Art, was installed in the Museum's exterior Garden Court.

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Among the important additions to the collection of modern art are some works not previously displayed. Late in 1981, the Museum purchased its first painting by Giorgio de Chirico, the Italian artist whose dreamlike and enigmatic works had such a profound influence on the Surrealists. Metaphysical Interior, painted in 1917, is typical of de Chirico's most influential works--a mysterious composition juxtaposing a drawing of fish, a box with fishing tackle, and carpenter's or draftsman's tools, the whole scene bathed in a cold light which casts long shadows. Paintings by de Chirico dating from this period are rare; this one was formerly in the collection of the Surrealist poet Paul Eluard. The Museum also purchased late in the year, with funds from various donors, its first painting by R. B. Kitaj, the internationally-known Cleveland-born artist whose retrospective exhibition was shown at the Museum in December and January. The Garden, a heavily impastoed, almost expressionistic, image of the garden behind Kitaj's London house, reflects a new direction in the artist's work.

Works of great distinction also entered the Oriental collection. The most significant painting is a rare work by the famous Chinese monk painter Mu Ch'i (Southern Sung Dynasty, active mid-13th century). Spontaneous and subtle, this monochrome ink painting in hanging scroll format depicts a swallow hovering above a lotus plant. The Museum owns two other hanging scrolls by the artist, whose few surviving works are preserved primarily in Japanese temples.

Japanese sculptures of early date and fine quality are now rarely found on the art market, but the Museum was fortunate in obtaining such a work--a small and delicately carved wood representation of the Buddhist "horse-headed" god of mercy, Bato Kannon, dating from the Kamakura Period (1185-1333). An equally rare Chinese work is a seven-foot-high carved and painted wood sculpture of a Buddhist deity, an eleven-headed Kuan Yin dating from the 12th century. The precise modeling of the face and graceful movement of the torso and draperies represent the art of the Northern Sung Dynasty at its highest level.

Deserving mention are a number of other works. The Islamic collection added an especially fine mosque lamp dateable to around 1315, a major example of Syrian enamelled glass of the Mamluk Period. A 14th-century German Gothic crucifix carved from walnut, a realistic representation of the suffering Christ, is a haunting and moving addition to the Museum's distinguished medieval collection. Augmenting the growing collection of German Baroque art, now one of the best outside central Europe, is an extraordinary ivory and ebony relief depicting the Annunciation. Attributed to the 18th-century German artist Paul Egell, the relief is cleverly designed to fool the eye and create the illusion of depth much admired by Baroque artists. Also from Germany is a small, minutely executed panel painting, dated 1823, of mounted huntsmen with a view of Munich by Wilhelm von Kobell, an artist whose work is highly prized in Germany but almost unknown outside that country.

Notable accessions in the department of prints and drawings include two 18th-century drawings: a pastoral scene by François Boucher and The Stag Hunt from Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo's Punchinello series, the latter a gift in memory of Paul Wick from his family. Seeking to build up 19th-century German and Austrian holdings, the department purchased a rare drawing of The Grindelwald Glacier, dated 1823, by German artist Joseph Anton Koch, and a luminous View of the Transept of San Giovanni in Laterano by Austrian watercolorist Jakob Alt. Of the many prints purchased or given to the Museum, a drypoint from Joan Miró's Series Black and Red, 1938, and John Marin's etching of the Brooklyn Bridge from Brooklyn (The Sun), 1915, are especially noteworthy.

A complete listing of the year's acquisitions is contained in the February issue of The Bulletin of The Cleveland Museum of Art.

On Wednesday, February 17, and Sunday, February 21, at 1:30 pm, a talk on the exhibition will be presented in the galleries.

For additional information or photographs, please contact the Public Relations Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.